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ABSTRACT

Home schooling is one of the fastest growing educational options in the United States. In 1995, the National Home Education Research Institute reported the number of home-schooled children to be approximately 500,000 students, one percent of the total school-age population. Parents choose home schooling for various reasons including differences in religion, concerns about the safety of public schools, overcrowding of public schools, contrasting views about discipline, providing a better learning environment for special needs children, avoiding negative peer pressure, devoting more time to development of children's special talents and interests, and beliefs that school curricula are ineffective or irrelevant. Research indicates that home schoolers score as well or better than their public school peers on achievement tests. This can be attributed to the significant amount of time parents' devote to their children's education and the availability of educational resources for home schooling. Because rural communities have different needs and resources from those found in the populated areas, nontraditional programs such as home schooling are becoming more prominent. With the advent of technology and personal computers, home schooling in rural areas is no longer dependent upon parental education or community resources. In addition, home schooling is cost-effective when compared to the time and money required to transport students to large, centralized schools. Idaho is considered one of the United States' leaders in home-schooling and has several home-schooling advocacy organizations. Idaho legislation passed in July 1995 gives home-schooled and private-school students access to the academic, elective, and extracurricular programs of public schools. Educators should comply with and support the requirements of their state legislature concerning home schooling. (LP)

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Homeschooling: What Educators Should Know

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In America in 1995, the National Home Education Research Institute reported the number of home schooled children, K - 12, to be approximately 500,000 students; approximately one percent of the total school-age population. This number is supported by the Home School Legal Defense Association (Ray 1992) with the suggestion that this number will eventually level off at approximately five percent of America's school-age children (Klipsch 1995). This is a huge segment of America's student population and to ensure them a quality education it is something that every district and school needs to address -- immediately, and increasingly so in the future.

Why Homeschooling?

Homeschooling is one of the fastest growing initiatives in America's educational options. It enjoys increasing recognition as a respectable alternative to public education.

A question often posed is why do parents decide to teach their children at home? Though there are many factors, it is strongly supported that parents do so for religious reasons. LaRue (1991) reported that eighty-six percent of parents surveyed responded that they homeschool

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for religious reasons. They feel that their children do not obtain moral and ethical training much less religious values, in America's public schools.

Other reasons include:

1. Children who have had problems adjusting to the public schools.
2. Safety issues, overcrowding, and drugs in public schools.
3. Parents who want to discipline their children as they choose.
4. To have a "warm, loving" home environment for special needs children.
5. To avoid negative peer pressure.
6. To have more time for development of special talents and interests.

   *Many educators feel that gifted and talented students will flourish under a regular curriculum. Such is not the case. It has been found that a significant number of public school drop-outs are among the gifted and talented.

7. School curriculums have little relevance to life, etc.

Research has shown that homeschoolers score as well or better than their public school peers. The performance of homeschooled children is attributed to a number of reasons. One reason is class size. Student to teacher ratio is usually two-on-one or at the worst, one-on-four. Secondly, homeschooled parents dedicate a

significant amount of their time to their children's education on a daily basis. Lastly, there are effective homeschooling curriculums readily available as well as other resources that continue to expand. Many universities in America have developed independent study programs for high school equivalency programs. Also, there are numerous educational televion programs, sites on the Internet, etc., which offer whole age-level curriculums in many subject areas.

Homeschooling in Rural Areas

Because rural communities have different needs and resources than those found in populated areas, nontraditional educational programs (homeschooling, adult education, minority education, etc.) are becoming prominent throughout rural America. Homeschooling has become a viable alternative to public education in rural areas. With the advent of technology and personal computers, homeschooling in rural areas is no longer dependent upon parental education and teaching skills; nor, so much, upon community resources.

Nontraditional rural programs cover a variety of services that are not typical of urban schooling. These services can take place outside of the school setting and often embody a community-level response to perceived needs. Special populations in rural areas -- minorities

(Hispanic, American Indian, etc.) handicapped, gifted, etc., have specific educational needs, many of which can be met by homeschooling.

Already, economically and technologically, homeschools are a viable alternative to centralized school systems. As the costs, both in time and money, of transporting students and maintaining large centralized school plants continue to increase, homeschooling is seen as a much cheaper educational alternative.

Homeschooling in Idaho

Idaho is no exception to the rise in homeschooled children. Several homeschool organizations such as the Idaho Coalition of Home Educators (ICHE), Idaho Home Educators (IHE), and Home Educators of Idaho (HEI) have been organized and are actively advocating the positions and purposes of homeschooling. Idaho is one of the nation's leaders in the home school movement. Efforts of parents, advocates for choice, associations and coalitions, and supportive legislators have resulted in great strides being made for Idaho's homeschooled children. Beginning July 1, 1995, the Idaho Legislature, through House Bill 171 and the resulting education code, 33-203 established the means by which homeschooled and private school students are given access to the academic, elective, and extracurricular programs of the public schools. This is a process that has

often been referred to as "dual enrollment." **Homeschooled and private school students may select those classes and activities in the public school setting to supplement or combine with their homeschooling curriculum.** The combination of these opportunities for homeschooled students in Idaho is certainly recognizable, and provides for a viable educational opportunity both at home and in the public school setting.

The Role of Educators

It is incumbent upon educators to comply and support the requirements of their various state legislatures concerning homeschooling. The fact that some families have chosen to pursue their children's education outside of public school systems, or in a combination of homeschooling and the public school setting, does not lessen the responsibilities that educators have to assist in the education of all children.

Educators are invited to advertise and publish lists of classes and services in their districts which would help facilitate homeschooling efforts in their local areas. For example, the role of public school libraries can be one of these services. The ability of a library to service homeschooled children is an obvious one. Library books, collections, and

services that are available to public school students can and should be made available during the same hours and in the same manner to homeschooled children residing in local school district areas.

Today's combination of knowledge about learning coupled with effective delivery systems may alter the role of public school educators. The day is coming when educators will monitor or certify demonstrated competencies rather than specifying how they are to be obtained.

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